

CITY OF BELMONT

PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2008, 7:00 PM

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at One Twin Pines Lane, City Hall Council Chambers.

1. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Parsons, Horton, McKenzie, Mercer, Mayer, Reed, Frautschi
Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Community Development Director de Melo (CDD), Associate Planner Gill (AP), Recording Secretary Flores (RS) City Attorney Zafferano (CA)

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS - None

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments) - None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4A. Minutes of November 6, 2008

RS Flores stated that she had made several minor grammar changes at Chair Parsons' request.

MOTION: By Commissioner Mercer, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to accept the Minutes of November 6, 2008, as corrected.

Ayes: Mercer, Mayer, Reed, Parsons

Noes: None

Abstain: McKenzie, Frautschi, Horton

Motion passed 4/0/3

5. OLD BUSINESS:

5A. Final Tree Planting Plan – 1520 Folger Drive

Commissioner Frautschi recused himself from discussion of this item because he lives within 500' of the subject property.

AP Gill summarized the staff memorandum, recommending approval of the plan as proposed. He noted that the applicant could not attend the meeting due to a prior engagement.

There were no questions from the Commission and no one in the audience wanted to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Mayer, seconded by Commissioner McKenzie, to adopt the Resolution approving a Final Tree Planting Plan for 1520 Folger Drive (Appl. No. 2008-0049).

Ayes: Mayer, McKenzie, Mercer, Reed, Parsons
Noes: None
Abstain: Horton
Recused: Frautschi

Motion passed 5/0/1/1

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

6A. PUBLIC HEARING – 620 Alameda de las Pulgas

To consider a Single Family Design Review to convert 599 square feet of crawl space (below the main living area) to habitable floor area, resulting in a 1,758 square foot dwelling (3,500 sq. ft. maximum building size permitted for this site). (Appl. No. 2008-0054)

APN: 044-043-480; Zoned: R-1B (Single Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303

Applicant(s) Owner(s): Douglas Ford & Ted Maeigomen

Project Planner: Rob Gill: 650-598-4204

AP Gill summarized the Staff Report, recommending approval with the conditions attached, and answered questions from the Commission.

Responding to Commissioners' questions, Douglas Ford, co-owner of the subject property, stated that they would like to pave the driveway going up towards the house and towards the porch, but had not discussed what to do with the section on the side where the trailer is currently parked. The trailer is not going to stay there, the chimney will be removed and the vacant space will be used for stairs. They chose not to add a two-car garage because they did not want to change the country look of the property and they have adequate parking on the driveway for two vehicles or more.

Chair Parsons opened the Public Hearing. No one came forward to speak.

Motion: By Commissioner Reed, seconded by Commissioner Frautschi, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed 7/0 by a show of hands.

Commissioner Reed would like the homeowner to consider putting in a garage and pave the driveway, but felt that the redesign was an improvement. If the driveway is to remain dirt and gravel, he hoped that erosion control measures would be adequate to protect Alameda de las Pulgas.

Commissioner Mayer concurred that the he would like to see the driveway paved and the unpaved portion at the front landscaped or covered in some proper fashion. The redesign was fine.

Vice Chair Horton concurred and felt that a parking garage could be tucked under the house and not be visible. She assumed they would be required to pave the driveway and any other place that they park cars. She suggested that pavers would be in keeping with the rural look of the property and would provide for drainage. She thought that it was an appropriate addition and could approve the project.

Commissioner McKenzie could make the findings since the garage was not involved in this addition and design improvements. If a driveway is not required, he hoped it would be made a condition of approving the project that there will be a paved driveway.

Commissioner Mercer concurred that the plan is an improvement to the property in general and with previous comments about the driveway. She believed that this home has a garage in its future and space is already semi excavated there. She noted that this house will be required to add a garage if it adds another bedroom or x number of square feet or it will be required to reserve out of its total square footage allotment space for a future garage. She applauded the removal of the chimney since they will be going away in the future.

Commissioner Frautschi felt the applicant was being penny foolish by not adding a garage and disagreed that visible parked cars in a wooded area appeared more natural than a garage would be. He felt that the site could have been developed far better without as much digging and that a better design would have been to go up or back on the house, but could support the project with the following added conditions. On Page 2 of the conditions of approval regarding existing landscape, he preferred to see a more complete photographic documentation of what is currently there since 17 truck loads of dirt going off this property will tear it up. He also asked for a clear indication of what is going to be paved in the drive area, adding that a parking pad in front of the house where the camper was parked would require a special procedure with Public Works. On Page 3, Condition C.1. should require a letter from the applicant to affected neighbors stating dates and hours of grading, staging areas, that there will be flagmen, and that hauling will not happen during certain peak hours.

Chair Parsons agreed with Commissioner Frautschi that there probably would have been an easier way to add on to the house than going under it, and felt that there may be some major foundation issues as they start digging under the house. He could support the project with the conditions suggested by Commissioner Frautschi, and with the requirement for a more complete landscape plan that shows the whole front yard, including driveways and appropriate sprinkler systems and choices of paving and plant materials.

MOTION: By Vice Chair Horton, seconded by Commissioner Reed, adopting the Resolution approving a Single-Family Design Review at 620 Alameda de las Pulgas (Appl.No. 2008-0054) with the following additions: 1) that the driveway be paved and that the parking pad be appropriately permitted and paved; 2) the landscaping be properly documented and replaced after construction and or re-landscaped, and that the Commission see a landscape plan; 3) a notification to surrounding neighbors of the work that is being done so that they can park or not park and move out of the way; and 4) a condition of approval that Public Works define hours that Alameda de las Pulgas should not be affected by the hauling, and 5) that the final landscape plan come back to the Commission for approval.

Yes: Horton, Reed, Mercer, Mayer, McKenzie, Frautschi, Parsons
Noes: None

Motion passed 7/0.

Chair Parsons announced that this item can be appealed to the City Council within 10 calendar days.

6B. PUBLIC HEARING – 968 & 956 Ralston Avenue

To consider a Parking Variance for expansion of the existing Divino restaurant into an adjacent 958 square-foot commercial space (Appl. No. 2008-0063)

APN: 044-152-120; Zoned: C-2 (General Commercial)

CEQA Status: Recommended Categorical Exemption per Section 15303

Applicant: Rosanna Marks & Vincenzo Cucco

Owner: Charlotte A. Nissen

Project Planner: Carlos de Melo: 650-595-7440

CDD de Melo summarized the staff memorandum, recommending approval of the Parking Variance. He noted that the Belmont Vista development across the street from the subject property had contacted the applicant with general questions and they were satisfied with the request and did not feel it necessary to attend the meeting to voice any concerns. He called attention to several corrections and changes to the plans and answered questions from the Commission. Commissioner Mayer suggested that staff work with the property owner to encourage upgrading of the parking lot landscaping.

Rosanna Marks-Cucco, co-owner of the Divino restaurant, stated that they have lost close to 15% of their business due to the economic downturn, and they hope that the ability to expand their services will help. They expect to use the space only about 2 to 3 times a month, so doubt that the parking will become an issue. They plan to bring the front façade up to date by streamlining the wooden face and continuing the awning, and hope for an expedient decision so they could take advantage of the approaching holiday season. She quoted from a letter she received from Charlotte Nissen, her landlord, which stated that full access to the parking lot at the rear of the building would be extended for the restaurant's needs after 7:00 p.m. The landlord also wanted her to emphasize that approximately 15-20 years ago the City had taken some of the land and had promised extra parking on that side of the lot.

Tim Auran, real estate broker who handles leasing for the property owner, confirmed that Ms. Nissen told him that when the City realigned Sixth Avenue they assured her that she could rely on the spaces in the City lot on Sixth Avenue for parking, and that she was disappointed that they took the parking in front of her store on Ralston away. He noted that she has worked with the City on the façade improvements, the building was just painted, parking lot resealed and striped within the last year and he has someone go by once a week to clean up the parking lot.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Ms. Marks-Cucco stated that 75% of their business would occur after 7:00 p.m. and that they would be open on Mondays for private parties.

Chair Parsons opened the Public Hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Reed, seconded by Commissioner Frautschi, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed 7/0 by a show of hands.

Commissioner Reed stated that, given the previous variances in 1982 and 1992, and the fact that there is full access to this parking lot after 7:00 for the restaurant, there are 11 space just across the street near the Woodmont building and additional parking in the Walgreen's parking lot as well as street parking up Sixth Avenue, and since the City wants to encourage vibrant business in Belmont, especially in this area of town, it would be an easy "yes" vote for him.

Commissioners Mayer, Horton, McKenzie and Mercer concurred with Commissioner Reed's comments and with staff's recommendations for this project.

Commissioner Frautschi also supported the project, but registered a complaint to staff that this property has had to request a parking variance every ten years and reminded that 5 years previously he had requested that a parking survey be done for the downtown area. He wanted to put staff on notice that they cannot continue giving parking variances in downtown unless they know how many space they have in total, how many are committed to all the projects, and how many are in reserve, because there is a point where they will have to deal with the problem. The crux of the report to him was on page 7 where it says "no formal parking survey" and he believes that a formal parking survey is needed so that they can eliminate this hassle for applicants having to get variances. He believed this could have been handled administratively if they had a total on what the figure was and it would only need to come to the Commission if there was no more parking available in the whole area. He thanked the applicant for bringing the project to them, and hoped the City would help in the façade improvement.

Chair Parsons stated that he could make all the findings and was glad they are going to expand. He too had concerns about the parking and asked staff to put this on future "Reports, Studies and Update" lists for follow up.

MOTION: By Commissioner Reed, seconded by Commissioner Frautschi, to adopt the Resolution approving a Variance for 968/956 Ralston Avenue (Appl. No. 2008-0063).

Ayes: Reed, Frautschi, Mayer, McKenzie, Mercer, Horton, Parsons
Noes: None

Motion passed 7/0

Chair Parsons announced that this item can be appealed to the City Council within ten days.

7. REPORTS, STUDIES AND UPDATES:

CDD de Melo stated that the parking survey study will be added to the list of Reports, Studies and Updates and that there is the potential to get an intern and/or include it in the Priority Calendar setting and the General Plan Update. He reported as follows on the current list:

7A. Motel 6 – 1101 Shoreway Road
No update.

7B. NDNU (Koret) Athletic Field
No update.

7C. Charles Armstrong School – 1405 Solana Drive
He has exchanged e-mails with the school to attempt to schedule a meeting with their board and City staff.

7D. Ralston/US-101 Landscape Project
Correspondence between the Belmont and Redwood City City Manager's offices and Public Works Departments indicate that Redwood City has serious concerns in trying to get this project going until the 2009/2010 time period. Belmont may have to take an alternative route and perhaps lump it together with the pedestrian/bike bridge project. Belmont has committed funds to arborist's work and there is an open budget item called Gateway Improvements that can be used to offset the change in plant increase, but there are some complications because it is a Caltrain right of way area; they are the original contractor for the flyover, and there are some encroachment permit issues with Caltrans. There are permits that have to be pulled with Caltrans and there are some disputes between the City of Redwood City and the contractor related to the finish out of the original flyover. He believed the funding was there from Caltrans but until they get the disputes resolved they are not going to work towards it. It continues to be on the City Manager's and Public Works Department's radar to try to get something going.

7E. San Mateo Development – North Road/43rd Avenue
Needs to coordinate with Chair Parsons to go to the City of San Mateo. Neighbors are starting to show interest. Commissioner Frautschi asked to be copied on emails between the City and a neighbor across the street. Chair Parsons believed there is a dumpster sitting on Belmont property at this site.

7F. 900 Sixth Avenue – Belmont Vista Facility
No update.

7G. Safeway – 1100 El Camino Real
No update.

Regarding CalTrain landscaping, he had forwarded the Commission's request to the Parks and Recreation Department, whose staff has direct contact with the contract landscaper. Ralston Avenue is being watered instead of the plants. He will check in with P&R to find out where they are with this concern.

Announced that the community meeting for the Belmont Village zoning effort as well as the Housing Element Update will be held on 12/4 in the EOC Room at 6:00 p.m. 700 notices had been mailed.

Chair Parsons reminded that the Twin Pines Park tree lighting ceremony will be held on Wednesday 12/3.

Chair Parsons announced that on 12/6 at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Mercer would be looking for help planting trees with the 4H youth at the vacant lot at 2300 block of Hasting Drive.

Commissioner Frautschi announced that the Tree Board will meet after the tree lighting ceremony in the Council Chambers. He planned to attend in order to request trees for the San Mateo border area and suggested that if anybody else had areas in the City where trees need to be planted they should attend the meeting.

8. CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2008

Liaison: Commissioner Mayer
Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Frautschi

Commissioner Mayer stated that he will be able to attend the meeting unless he is appointed to a sequestered jury at that time.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m. to a Regular Planning Commission Meeting on Tuesday, December 16, 2008 p.m. in Belmont City Hall.

Carlos de Melo
Planning Commission Secretary

CD's of Planning Commission Meetings are available in the
Community Development Department.

Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment.